

Eye On Campus

Bone Woman's Delco Trip Attracts Hundreds PSU Delco Is "The Highlight" Of Koff's Lecture Tour

Dinner With Koff, A Fullfilling Experience

Commentary by John Miller

By JOHN MILLER
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After months of anticipation and planning author and forensic scientist Clea Koff's paid a visit to Penn State's Delco campus. More than 200 students, faculty, and members of the surrounding community filled the Classroom Building lounge on April 13 to get a peek at "the Bone Woman."

Koff spoke for an hour about her life's pursuits, her work her book based on her experiences as a forensic anthropologist in Africa and Eastern Europe.

Koff was intrigued with the possibility of coming to campus months ago when she learned from English Professor Patricia Hillen that "The Bone Woman" was being put to use in many of the classrooms.

Hillen made arrangements for Koff after she agreed to speak at Delco in January. Koff also visited Brown University and Michigan State for guest lectures. Of her visit to Delco Koff said, "this campus is the highlight of my trip," as she took the podium. She expressed her gratitude for being one of many campus "idols."

"It was a secret dream of mine for 'Bone Woman' to make it into classrooms," she said.

Koff was selected by the United Nations' International Criminal Tribunal to go to Rwanda after the 1994 genocide as part of a 16-member team.

However, her dream suddenly became a nightmare when she encountered the mass graves in Africa and East Europe.

The worst, she said, were in Bosnia.

"The world as I see it filters through the graves I saw. The bodies still had wires and blindfolds on," Koff said.

After comparing what she encountered in Europe and Africa to the sus-

pected genocide currently taking place in Sudan, she had some very strong words for men like the late Slobodan Milosevic who was responsible for the "ethic cleansing" campaign in Bosnia in the mid 1990's.

"How does someone make themselves so superior and arrogant?," Koff rhetorically asked the audience.

"The answer is they are not because those criminals were tried and convicted with evidence gathered by people who they thought they were better than and also from people they killed," she said

Yet throughout the presentation Koff still maintained a sense that she was fulfilling her destiny by reaching out to the dead and by doing so helped to comfort the families they left behind.

"I never questioned what I was doing there. I was tremendously happy and fulfilled to be helping in the field. I only realized after the fact how many dangerous situations our teams got into on missions," she said.

Koff's appearance was, in part, first to promote the fourth printing of "The Bone Woman."

The inspiration came from Koff reading a book titled "Witnesses from the Grave: the Stories Bones Tell" by Eric Stover when she was 18 years old.

Koff is also making personal appearances to increase public awareness of what she calls MPID (Missing Persons Identification Resource Center).

"It's a non-profit organization which will hopefully help identify the remains of 40,000+ Americans," she said.

After about 20 minutes of questions from audience, Koff autographed copies of "The Bone Woman" which were available from campus bookstore.

The long line that stretched from the signing table to the door formed shortly after Koff stepped down from the podi-

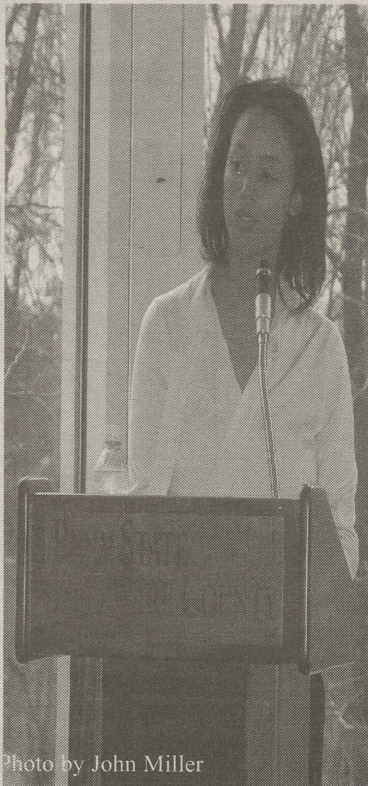
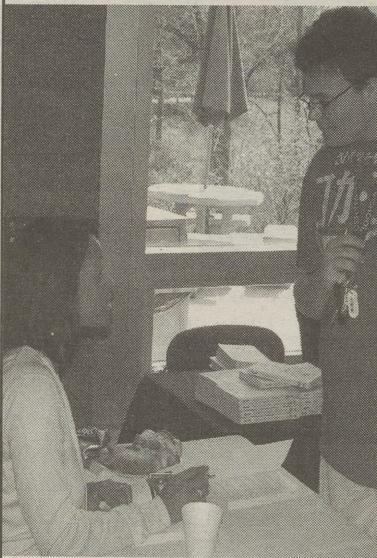


Photo by John Miller

"Bone Woman," Klea Koff visited Delco, April 13. She lectured to a crowd of over 200 people.

"The world, as I see it, filters through the graves I saw. The bodies still had wires and blindfolds on."

-Clea Koff



Koff signed copies of her book, "The Bone Woman," after her speech.

Photo by John Miller



Koff had dinner with students and faculty, hosted by Professor Patricia Hillen.

"Bone Woman" Lecture Note Highlights

- At age 23 Koff joined a team of 16 anthropologists to gather evidence for UN war crimes tribunals.

- Koff supports "MPID," an organization that helped identify the remains of 40,000 Americans.

- "The Bone Woman" is now in its fourth print.